

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WYNNE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

"YOU are expected, sir," said the servant who opened the door of the house in Grafton Street to Phil, as he showed him into a small room on the ground-floor; a room that seemed a hybrid between a boudoir and a study. Books abounded, one or two small writing-tables were stationed here and there, and on either side of the fire were placed large reclining-chairs and foot-stools, suggestive of a lady's occupation of the apartment.

In one of these chairs, placed to face the door, sat Ellinor Yorke. The light from some six or eight wax-candles, above the mantelpiece, fell full upon her face, lighting up the pure, pale complexion, the full, drooping white eyelids, the scarlet-red lips, the glow of gold in the hair. She was dressed in some plain, tight-fitting black garment, without ornament of any sort.

Phil noted this, as she slowly rose from her chair and advanced to meet him.

"You have come to tell me it is not true?" she said, making no pretence of greeting; scarcely, indeed, waiting till the servant had closed the door behind him.

"What is not true?" asked Phil, trying to get time to collect together his thoughts.

"It is not true that Rodney Thorne died by his own hand;" and now she had come close up to him. She was nearly as tall as he; their eyes were almost upon a level—her large, full, dark ones were looking straight into his.

"The jury brought in a verdict of accidental death," answered Phil, meeting

her gaze with a look as steadfast as her own.

"And they brought in a right verdict. I say it was a right verdict. I read the evidence, word for word. They were bound to bring in that verdict, and no other."

Phil stood silent.

Ellinor went on, her tone increasing in intensity and vehemence.

"I read every word of the evidence that man—his servant—gave. His master told him to bring the pistols in their case. He said he had sold them to a friend, and wished to see they were in order. He did not know they were loaded, the servant did not know either. The man left the room for a moment; he heard a shot; he came back and found his master dead. It is as plain as possible. It was an accident. What right would they have had to bring in any other verdict than accidental death?"

"What right indeed?" asked Phil coldly, clearly, sarcastically. "Who was there who would have dared come forward and say the man was half-mad, befooled, besotted, and had a desperate reason for putting a desperate end to his life?"

Ellinor drew back a step; for the first time her eyes drooped beneath his.

"Why—why—why——" she began vehemently once more. Then she suddenly broke off, took another backward step, flung herself into the armchair she had just quitted, hiding her face in her hands.

Phil's heart began to soften all in a moment. Anger, vehemence, effrontery even, he was prepared to meet, but for such an utter collapse as this he was totally unprepared. No doubt, if he had been a wise or an experienced man, he would have said, "Miss Yorke, allow me to ring for your maid," and would there and then

have taken his leave. Being, however, not very wise, nor overburdened with experience, he took an altogether opposite course; he went over to the young lady's side and addressed her, gravely, it is true, but in tones from which coldness and sarcasm had together disappeared.

"Miss Yorke, I entreat you not to give way like this," he said. "What is past is past; we shall do no good by discussing it. I have let my friendship for Rodney carry me over the borders of politeness, I fear."

But Ellinor did not withdraw her hands from her face; she only bowed her head lower, till it almost rested on her knee.

Phil went on, his manner gaining in warmth:

"I had no right to speak to you as I did a moment ago—as I did in the garden at Stanham. Great Heaven! who am I to pronounce judgment on my fellow-creatures in this way!"

Who was he, indeed, his thoughts repeated to himself, that he should set himself up as a ruler and a judge? Heaven only knew what sins he might have been guilty of had he been born a woman, and, above all, a woman with a face and figure like Ellinor Yorke's. Why, as she bent forward thus in all the abandon of her grief and remorse under the full light of those eight wax-candles, her figure, in its tight-fitting black robe, presented a perfect outline of poetic classic grace. He had been—yes, he was willing to confess it—a little hard upon her, had spoken the truth plainly—nay, more, brutally to her.

He very much doubted, in fact, whether Mrs. Thorne herself could have pronounced a harsher judgment, and as for Lucy Selwyn, there could be no doubt that, bitter as her wrongs had been, they would never have wrung from her gentle lips so hard a sentence as his own had dared to utter.

There is a place for repentance, so the preacher said, for the worst of sinners under heaven; who was he to say that Miss Yorke was never to attain to it?

And so he repeated once more in a voice that showed even deeper concern:

"Miss Yorke, I entreat you not to give way like this. If words of mine have pained you, I can only repeat, I, at any rate, am not the right person to utter them."

No shadow of doubt as to the genuineness of her remorse or repentance crossed his mind. A man blessed with all his faculties (save that of eyesight) might well have harboured a transient suspicion, but for a

man of six-and-twenty, momentarily bereft of all his faculties (save that of eyesight), it would have been an impossibility.

Ellinor drew her hands slowly from her face, and lifted her bowed head. She was white with an almost death-like pallor. There were no signs of tears on her face, but her eyes had a mournful, haunting look in them far more pathetic than the drawn redness which tears are apt to give. Her voice was slow and tremulous as she said, half turning her head towards him:

"Your words were true words; you had a right to utter them, but if ever it should happen to you to have your heart broken and miserable as mine is now, I pray to Heaven that one may go to you speaking kinder and more merciful words than you have spoken to me to-night."

Phil began to feel more and more what a hard-hearted brute he had been.

"I did not think you would take it in that way," he stammered. "I ought to have seen—ought to have known——"

"That I had a heart in my body, though I did not choose to lay it bare to every chance passer-by," finished Ellinor, speaking in the same low tremulous tones as before. "You thought I could hear of this man's death—aye, and have it laid to my charge, unmoved, without a twinge of remorse. Even now you will scarcely believe me when I say that henceforth to my very last hour remorse and pain can never leave me, that all joy and pleasure in living is over for me for ever."

"I vow and protest——" Phil began.

But Ellinor interrupted him, laying her hand upon his arm as he stood in front of her.

"Mr. Wickham, tell me one thing, and I shall be for ever grateful to you. What can I do—what is it possible for me to do to prove to you—to all the world that my sorrow is genuine, and that I am bent on making atonement? Shall I go to Mrs. Thorne, own all my fault, and implore her forgiveness, or what is there I can do?"

Phil would rather she had left him and "all the world" out of the question, and simply said: "What ought I to do by way of atonement?" However, after all it came to much the same, he said to himself philosophically; it was only putting the thing in another form. His thoughts flew swiftly to Lucy Selwyn.

"There is one to whom acknowledgment and recompense are due far more even than to Mrs. Thorne," he answered gravely. "Not that it is possible that

either can ever be adequately rendered. But the attempt might be made."

A sudden flush passed over Ellinor's face. "You allude to Miss Selwyn, of course." She paused a moment. "You would like to make me feel I have injured her—you would like me to go to her and beg her forgiveness? Mr. Wickham, I am no saint. I have never pretended to be one, and shall never attempt to be one, and I tell you frankly that you could not have set me a harder thing to do than to go to this girl and beg her pardon."

Phil began to see his way a little through what seemed to him a succession of difficulties.

"I said nothing about begging pardons," he answered. "I don't see the slightest necessity for such a thing. Where would be the kindness of laying bare to Miss Selwyn the faithlessness of the man she loved and trusted? No; what I meant was, that if you are inclined to do anything to show—I mean, for poor Rodney's sake—there would be plenty of scope for kindness towards Miss Selwyn. She is utterly without friends, has very little money. She is very young, very gentle, very broken-hearted—"

Ellinor lifted her white eyelids, for one moment letting her eyes rest on him with a curious expression. Then she said:

"Give me her address, please. To-morrow I will call and see her, and if you will call in on me here on the day after, I will tell you the result of our interview, and consult with you as to what can best be done for her. Say good-night to me now, Mr. Wickham. I am very tired—very worn-out. Do not forget, the day after to-morrow."

And somehow it seemed to Phil that, while she was saying these words with her lips, those dark, passionate, mournful eyes of hers paraphrased them somewhat in this fashion:

"Do not forget that all my hopes of repentance centre in your help and counsel. You, who have stricken me into the very dust with your harsh, cruel words, hold out your right hand and help me to stand upright again."

Phil went back to his hotel that night in much better spirits than he had been when he set forth from it, tired and hungry though he was, and well might be. He could not help feeling that he had, on the whole, accomplished a very fair evening's work—shown Ellinor Yorke a deed worthy of her doing, and, in all probability, raised

up for Lucy Selwyn a valuable friend for life. It did not occur to him for one moment to doubt the genuineness of Ellinor's sorrow, nor the benefit that her friendship, once accorded to the friendless Lucy, would be to her. Gracious and kindly thoughts began to fill his heart towards these two young women, so far apart in beauty, in station, in acquirements, yet somehow linked together in his fancy by a common sorrow.

Now, it is all very well for a young man of six-and-twenty to have his heart filled with gracious and kindly thoughts towards two gracious and kindly young women. Men with older brains and less expansive sentiments are apt to detect in such thinking a spice of danger for, say, two at least out of the three persons concerned.

CHAPTER XX.

"THERE'S one thing I'm resolved upon, at any rate. No one shall accuse me of wearing the willow for Phil," said Edie Fairfax to herself, as, with a marvellous expedition, she put the finishing touches to her morning toilette.

Edie was a mistress in the art of swift dressing. Few could hope to rival her nimble fingers in the rapid adjustment of hooks, buttons, or tapes; none could surpass them. It is true that her room, after the process of robing or disrobing had been gone through, was apt to present an appearance of "most admired disorder," over which old Janet would wring her hands in despair. Garments would lie here, there, everywhere; brushes and combs might be found comfortably reposing in the fender; pins by the dozen would bestrew the floor. What did it matter so long as my little lady turned herself out fresh as a daisy, radiant as Hebe herself, in something under twenty minutes?

On this particular morning that Miss Edie had spoken out so bravely her personal objections to that "true plant" "wherewith young men and maids distrest, and left of love, are crowned," dressing operations had been conducted with even more than ordinary despatch. Janet, tapping at the door, had been dismissed with so peremptory a reminder that she should wait till she was rung for, that the old body dissolved into tears on the spot. And then the bright brown hair had had a vehement brushing, a rapid twisting and turning, and been tucked up into the tightest and simplest of knots at the back of the wilful little head, while the said

wilful little head had nodded sagely to its own reflection in the mirror opposite, and had announced its brave intentions of inaugurating a new régime in the days that were coming.

"I've made up my mind, whatever happens, I won't show I'm miserable—no, I won't—I won't—I won't! No one shall come pitying me, and laughing at me all the time in their sleeves," she vowed as she stuck a final hair-pin in her twist of hair. "Why, I would far sooner people hated me outright, and called me the horriddest of flirts, and the most vicious of vixens, than be fussed over, and pitied, and crooned over by all the old maids in the place. The creatures! and after all, what is there for me to grow sallow and lackadaisical over. Everything is going on just exactly as I wished. I made the arrangement, not Phil; he simply falls in with it as he does with everything I arrange. Next year will soon come round, and we shall be laughing together over it all before we well know where we are. Yes, after all, there is nothing for me to break my heart over."

It was all very well for Miss Edie, in the bright morning sunlight, thus to assure herself that there was nothing in the world to break her heart over. Last night's stars might have told a different tale as they peeped into her bedroom-window long after midnight, and saw her lying face downwards on the floor; only not crying because every tear she had at command was shed, and uttering neither plaint nor wail because her powers of utterance were exhausted with the long hours of passionate weeping she had passed in the solitude of her room.

Edie had received through Colonel Wickham on the previous day a message from Phil, and probably to it might be traced both her tears of overnight and her brave resolutions of the morning. Phil's message had run somewhat as follows:

"Tell Edie I shall be off to New York in a day or two—met Arthur Kenrick last week (you remember Kenrick, he rowed three in the Cambridge boat two years ago), and he's just starting to shoot buffalo in the plains. I've told him time hangs rather heavily on my hands just now, and I'm exactly in the humour for a tramp through Utah, or anywhere else he likes to go. But tell Edie she may expect to see me on the 1st of October, next year, without fail"—the last sentence being much underscored.

Possibly it was the underscoring of these lines which brought back hope and courage to little Edie's heart. "There is nothing small in art;" in a yet deeper sense there is nothing small in love: a sigh will speak volumes, a look may tell a whole heart's history, and, as in Edie's case, the underscoring of six consecutive words give them the weight of Cæsar's decrees, or of inspired prophecy itself. Anyhow, with a step as light as a bird's, and a face that seemed to have the sun itself shining on it, she went down to the breakfast-room that morning.

The squire looked up from his paper as she entered.

"The barometer's rising," he said to himself; "Heaven grant it may last." Aloud he said, determined to take advantage of the promise of fair weather: "Edie, it will be cattle-market to-morrow; you may as well ride down with me to Green Farm. There are a lot of little Alderneys I should like you to see, before I tell Melhuish to make an offer for them."

It must be admitted that Edie's whimsicality of temperament, her sudden storms and sunshine, took not a little of the pleasantness out of the squire's life, and savoured to him somewhat of the mysterious and inexplicable. He had shambled through life himself in easy, slipped fashion; why in Heaven's name couldn't other persons do the same, instead of mounting themselves on stilts to go down a hill, or putting on hob-nailed boots when nothing but the smoothest of pasture-lands lay before them?

But stilts and hob-nailed boots were for that day, at any rate, laid on one side. The squire and his little daughter enjoyed the most cheery of rides together, and inspected the Alderneys in the most amicable of tempers. Even the poor people, as Edie rode through the village towards home, said one to another, "Our young lady looks more like herself than she has for many a day past."

"Our young lady" was the name by which Miss Edie was known among the cottagers, whom alternately she petted and scolded, over whose small vices she was wont to grow furious, and over whose equally small virtues she was apt to be enthusiastic.

Someone else beside the villagers noted Edie's bright looks that morning.

"She is like an incarnate sunbeam," said Lord Winterdowne to himself, as a sudden turn in the road down which he was riding brought him face to face with

Edie and her father on their spirited chestnuts.

Now a poetic simile in the mouth of Lord Winterdowne was an altogether unusual occurrence, and showed him to be in an altogether unusual frame of mind. For truisms and platitudes he had an almost fatal facility, but, as a rule, when he courted the Muses, they shrugged their shoulders and turned their backs on him.

This Lord Winterdowne, seventh baron of that name, lord of the manor, and owner of so many thousand acres on that side of the county, was an exemplary man—a type of a certain class which, no doubt, so long as our country lasts, will have its representatives among the peers of the realm. His mind was of the neat and unpretending order, so likewise were his manners and appearance. He was a man who seemed born to preside at learned or scientific societies; to eat charity dinners; to respond to toasts in elegant and appropriate language. This up to the present moment had seemed to be all that life had required of him, and so far he had acquitted himself admirably of his duty. His succession to the Winterdowne estates and title had in nowise caused him to diverge from the even tenour of his way. The management of the estate was lodged in competent hands, and beyond the addition of a Holbein to the picture-gallery, and the renovation of a large but disused observatory built out from the castle, there really seemed nothing calling for any special exertion of brain-power on his part. In age he was about forty-five years, in appearance he was tall, thin, slightly bald, with stooping shoulders, and a very high bridge to his nose. What his eyes were like did not in the least matter, as they were invariably sheltered by slender, gold-rimmed eyeglasses. When it is added that whatever else in life he might overlook or ignore, one thing he never forgot—namely, that he was a Winterdowne, and the son of a Winterdowne, all has been said that need be to give a sketch in outline of this far from remarkable English nobleman.

His first remark to the squire, after the usual greetings had been said, showed that he was in a somewhat disturbed state of mind.

"I was going up to your house"—his horse's head was turned in an opposite direction—"a—that is, I should have been going if I had not met you," he said. And as he said this his eyes, not a doubt, said

over and over again, while he peered at Edie through the gold-rimmed glasses: "An incarnate sunbeam—yes, a sunbeam incarnate, that is what she is!"

"Delighted to see you at any time!" responded the squire heartily. "So—ho—quiet, my lamb!"—this to his fidgety chestnut. "Anything I can do for you?"

"I was going to trespass on your kindness, if I might be allowed," was Lord Winterdowne's reply. "I have been told that it is expected of me to inaugurate the Christmas gaieties in the county by festivities of some sort at the Castle. Now a ball seems to me the right sort of thing. What do you think?" here directly appealing to Edie, who replied immediately with an earnestness that made Coquette start, lay back her ears, and whisk her tail:

"A ball! Oh, how heavenly! Depend upon it, it is the right and only sort of thing you could do at Christmas."

"Exactly," Lord Winterdowne went on; "but here is my difficulty—the ball-list! Now, in every county there are people who must be asked, and people who may be asked, and people who neither must nor may. Now, I am too new to the county to be able to make out my list unaided, and——"

"Ah, I see," interrupted the squire, who was anxious to set his fidgety chestnut going again; "you want Edie to run her eye over the list. Come in to-night and talk it over—dinner at half-past seven as usual, or luncheon to-morrow at half-past one—shall expect you. Yes, beautiful morning for a canter! To-night, then—shall be delighted to see you. Good-bye!"

"I wonder," thought Edie, as once more, side by side with her father, they set off at a good pace down the country-road, "I wonder if Phil will put off his trip to America, and come down for the ball when he hears of it!" And she mentally registered a resolve that long before the important matter of the ball-list could be adjusted and the invitations sent out, Phil should somehow receive private intimation of the intended festivity.

OUR PLAYGROUNDS.

TRULY a cheerful sight for Christmas is this—prison doors opened wide, the great iron gates swinging idly on their hinges, cells and corridors all deserted, while the silent echoing quadrangle is open to any

casual passer-by. And this is Horse-monger Lane Gaol, once the dreariest of all London prisons, and now, perhaps, the happiest spot of ground in all the metropolis. For there is an open gateway pierced in the tall, gloomy prison wall, through which you may hear a shrill hubbub of small voices, and, looking in at the gate, you may see the strangest and yet merriest collection of little elves that were ever brought together. There is a great courtyard, about an acre in extent, surrounded by the high prison walls, over which the pale winter sunshine is now cheerfully streaming, while over the rough ground within children are swarming in hundreds. There are giant strides stepping out to the fullest extent possible to the arms and legs of their lilliputian patrons; swings in full swing; see-saws working up and down, with half-a-score of youngsters clinging to either end. Other athletic imps are hanging on to the parallel bars—hanging on by arms or legs as may happen, and twirling about and going through their small feats and displays of strength with the greatest enthusiasm. Then there is a football flying about, quite regardless of Rugby or other rules; but everybody has a kick at it. And the least among the small, who can do nothing else, can jump up and down and shout to the full extent of their tiny lungs, as if life were a thing of joy and abundance, and as if they, in spite of broken shoes and ragged garments, were getting a full, overflowing measure of all good things going.

They come in little flocks, these children, from all directions, hurry up to the prison gate—its gloom has no terrors for them—and as they pass into the big playground they seem to shake off the cares of the world already creasing their infant faces, and with a hop, skip, and a jump, they dart shouting into the thick of the throng. There are girls, too, as many as boys, but these make their way to the farther end of the ground, which is fenced off for their use. The high walls keep off the chill wind, and make things snug and pleasant, while there is a great breadth of open, sunny ground, rough as you please, and uneven with old foundations sticking up here and there; but all the better fun, it seems, for the children; and if there were a blade of grass anywhere visible, be sure it would be quickly shuffled away by hundreds of tiny feet. Anyhow, the place seems exactly to suit

the children of the neighbourhood; they throng to it at every available moment, and at times nearly three thousand children may be seen collected there, or rather there dispersed, all playing and shouting to their very utmost—not such shouts as you might hear in the playing fields of Eton or at Rugby, but a thin, piping outcry like the chirping of myriads of London sparrows.

There are children of all sorts here; some with comforters and warm caps and knickerbockers, as bright and warm as you please, and some bare-headed and bare-footed, with festoons of rags about their limbs, but they all seem to agree remarkably well; and the caretaker says, that, as far as keeping order goes, a word from him is enough, and that quarrels and bad language are unknown. And they caper, and shout, and jump about with as much joy and delight as if they had all comfortable homes and warm firesides to return to, and the prospect of a cheerful meal at the end of their play, when darkness comes on and the playground is closed, and the long lines of shops in the great thoroughfares begin to sparkle and glow with lights; whereas very many of these children are, as the caretaker remarks, "like the burrds of the air, and know as much where their next meal shall come from."

Fortunately, there are kind people in the neighbourhood, who have a thought for these birds of the air, and send sundry little pickings to the playground, where they are soon picked up by the hungry little sparrows.

It is a capital notion to have as caretaker a man who can give instruction in athletics, and here is one who has been a soldier-instructor of the same for fifteen years or so, and who now looks after the athletic principles of this crowd of young people, and tries to infuse a scientific element into their unformed gambols. Our caretaker can show the result of his labours.

But just at this moment a cry of distress is heard, and our caretaker is away in a moment. A small damsel of seven or eight years is making this way, crying lustily, "Melia Jane went and throwed dirt in my eyes, she did." And statistics and everything else are forgotten as the kind-hearted fellow kneels down and carefully wipes the little damsel's eyes, as he listens to her tale of 'Melia Jane's atrocities. And leaving him to distribute justice among the rival

daughters of Eve, we will take a glance at the surroundings of the prison.

There is a notice on the prison-wall dated 1791, but the prison was not ready for its inmates till 1798. "A miserable low site," writes one of its visitors, coming to see Leigh Hunt, who here passed two weary years' confinement for a harmless satire on the Prince Regent. Moore and Byron came to visit him in 1812, and we may fancy the little dapper warbler and the pale, aristocratic Byron glancing up at these stern, unhandsome-looking walls.

It is still a gloomy, lowering passage between the busy, shoppy Newington Causeway, where omnibuses and tramcars are spinning along so merrily, and the once dreary prison with its sinister memories. You may picture to yourself the crowds that seethed and whirled through that narrow, darksome pass on the hanging mornings of former days, when the scaffold was erected high over the prison gateway. Such as on that gloomy November morn described by the late Charles Dickens, when the Mannings paid the penalty of their crime, and when the most lamentable accompaniment of the dread spectacle was the swarm of young children, with their shrill shouts, and cries, and imprecations, who formed a large proportion of the ribald, mocking crowd. What a terribly long way, or rather, what a cheerfully long way is this from our playground of to-day, with its hundreds—nay, thousands—of merry little grigs, shouting and chirping over their play!

It was this Horsemonger Lane, by the way, which is now no longer known as the Lane, but has taken to itself the name of Union Street, as if even the very stones of the street were anxious to throw off their prison associations—it was this very street or lane that witnessed the last of the public executions in London. And Horse-monger takes up the dreary record of public executions almost from the time when Kennington Common was the usual place of execution for the criminals of these parts, as Tyburn was for the rest of London. One of the earliest and most noted of these scenes on the scaffold, was the execution of Colonel Despard and six of his associates, in 1803. The Colonel had been arrested at The Oakley Arms, Lambeth, with about thirty others, all agog to subvert the British Constitution, and these were tried at the Sessions House adjoining the prison—the Sessions House is still in flourishing existence, with its

highly respectable frontage towards Newington Causeway, and its offices of the county officials adjoining—and the pick of the criminals were condemned to death. It was a trumpery conspiracy, which had been best punished with contemptuous mercy, but the frightened Government took it seriously, and insisted upon all the clumsy, cruel elaboration of a prosecution for high treason. And so, with all due formalities of dragging on a hurdle, hanging, beheading, and quartering, the last "high treason" decapitation that has been done in England, and that probably ever will be done, came to an end. But enough of these gloomy reminiscences. Let us return to the cheerful playground of to-day.

The credit of getting this famous playground for the children of this crowded, thickly-populated neighbourhood, is due almost entirely to the Metropolitan Public Garden, Boulevard, and Playground Association, and chiefly to their chairman, Lord Brabazon, who persevered through many obstacles till success was attained. When Horsemonger Lane was abolished as a prison, and its inmates transferred to Cold-bath Fields, Clerkenwell House of Detention, and Westminster, the justices of Surrey, to whom the site belonged, were inclined to sell the place for building purposes, and it was only after long argument and correspondence that sufficient interest was excited in favour of the scheme of making a playground here, to move the hearts of the justices of the peace to lease the ground to the Playground Association at a nominal rental. That the scheme has been a great success the merest glance within the playground will show; the children have adopted it as their own; their charter is emblazoned on the board by the entrance, which bears the lengthy title which we may abridge here and elsewhere to Playground Association—a board which bears the pleasing announcement, (I quote from memory), "No adults are allowed to enter unless accompanied by children." But this need not be taken too literally. The children themselves have no objection to the entrance of a well-conducted stranger, even if fully grown-up, and the caretaker is proud to show the details of his charge, and to descant on the progress his boys have made in athletics—biceps muscles developed and firm, and the calves of the legs with the muscles showing like whipcord, where not long ago all was feeble and flabby.

Now that we are on the playground trail, it may be worth while, taking the little red-bound report of the Playground Association as a guide, to pay a flying visit to some of the other oases in the wilderness of houses which have recently been opened to the public. The Elephant and Castle is within a stone's-throw, and there is no better place as a centre, with its tram-lines radiating in all directions. And so in a few minutes we are in the churchyard of St. Mary, Newington, now pleasantly laid out in flower-beds and green lawns, with a tomb showing here and there, covered with creepers, or a white headstone, where those who sleep below were persons of importance in the parish. There is a tall clock-tower near the roadway which marks the site of the former churches—all of them small, and of no architectural account—which have existed on the site, from the earliest Saxon church which was honoured with a mention in Domesday.

The new, cheerful-looking red-brick mission-room stands farther back, surrounded by the headstones which have been removed to make room for grass and flowers. And surely there is something much more pleasant and congenial in the notion of such things growing overhead, and the patter of children's feet, and the tramp of the cheerful living world always sounding, than in the cold gentility of the most elaborate headstone. Here no games are allowed, although a quiet canter in string-harness is not objected to; and here are elderly people to be met with, taking a turn up and down in the sheltered nooks, while, in addition to the young people driving about or being driven in teams, there are little groups of children, sent, no doubt, by their mothers to be safely out of the way. Little girls, with big babies in their arms, tuck themselves into the corners of seats, and smaller sisters curl themselves about them, getting a little warmth from the intermittent sunshine, and killing the time agreeably enough till mother comes home—from the wash-tub, let us hope, and not from the assemblage of tubs with golden hoops which are marked Old Tom and Cream of the Valley.

Another tramcar takes us to a newly-opened garden on the south-east corner of Blackfriars Bridge, an enclosure so small that everybody had overlooked it till our Association put the Corporation in mind of it. Strictly speaking there are two gardens: one a little bit, as big as a billiard-table,

running down to the river, with a strange view of a lane of water hemmed in between two great bridges, with a cluster of boats and barges clinging to the bank; the other a little strip close to the busy thoroughfare; which you might pass half-a-dozen times without noticing it. But the youngsters have found it out.

Indeed it is charming to see how the smallest space of ground is utilised by the young ones for a game of play; how they descend upon such a place out of space, like a flock of wild geese from the blue heavens, upon some tiny pool; how readily the listless shuffle of the street is exchanged for the hearty scamper of the playground.

There is a nice little nook, too, in the Waterloo Road, near the railway terminus, where, on the hot summer days, rest and shade are to be had as artisans and workwomen cross from one close, narrow street to another; with a corner with swings and such-like for the children, which is always well occupied. And what a pleasant corner that is, too, by St. Paul's, the quiet garden among the city crowds, with the bones of the old cathedral, and fragments of piers and old foundations lying about, where you may sit and muse, or dream with the roar of Cheapside in the ears!

All this is but a small taste or sample of what our active Playground Association is doing, and trying to do, with the small waste-places of the metropolis. Many are the graveyards that have been rescued from the builder's hands and converted into pleasant gardens—open to all the world. And the society looks after all kinds of open spaces, the centres of neglected squares, the gardens of old Inns of Chancery; in any direction where even a little bit of open ground is to be discovered, the Association is ready with plans for appropriating it to the public good. Not always are their suggestions received with gratitude and appreciation. The Dog in the Manger has continued to flourish ever since Æsop's days, and is often now to be found in responsible positions, and is frequently a large owner of property. But, on the whole, now that the movement is fairly started, people join in with alacrity. The report of the Association shows as many as fifty-four churchyards or burial-grounds laid out as public gardens, and many of them in the centre of low and thickly-populated districts. Besides these, a number of patches of waste or common land have

been laid out as playgrounds or recreation-grounds. And, rough as may be the neighbourhood surrounding such a playground, experience has shown that there is no difficulty in maintaining order within it. Thus, in St. Luke's, Whitechapel, parish playground, which is maintained by the vicar of that parish, a woman at seven shillings a week acts as caretaker, "and maintains perfect order, though the neighbourhood is of the roughest."

In another playground the clergy of St. Peter's, London Docks, have instituted a skittle-ground for men, and find it well used on summer evenings. Then there is Poplar Recreation Ground, maintained by the Poplar Board of Works, which is reported to be "a success, used by the old inhabitants, who in fine weather lounge on the seats smoking and reading;" while a children's playground helps to alleviate any "over-pressure" on the brains of the pupils of the board-school, and a gymnasium is much used and appreciated.

Of larger open spaces not rising to the dignity of parks, we have London Fields and Hackney Downs, both well frequented on Sundays and holidays by the inhabitants of the dense and crowded districts about them; and there are sundry other spaces, well known, no doubt, to residents in East London—Well Street Common, with thirty acres of land, and North Mill and South Mill Fields, with, together, nearly sixty acres, which have also been opened to the public by the Metropolitan Board of Works.

As to parks, London is perhaps better off in that respect than any other great town in the kingdom. The three royal parks—St. James's, the Green, and Hyde—throw a continuous band of verdure right across the fashionable part of London, and with more than eight hundred and fifty acres of surface, afford a magnificent breathing-place to the wealthy quarters of the town. This is, perhaps, more than balanced by the grand inheritance secured to the people of the east in Epping Forest, with its five thousand three hundred and forty-eight acres of wild brushwood and forest. Victoria Park, too, with its three hundred acres, is a splendid playground for the thronging crowds of Bethnal Green and Haggerstone, although the tendency of a fine open park is to create a genteel neighbourhood and to bring good middle-class houses into being—not an undesirable result in itself, but which tends still further to compress an already

overcrowded neighbourhood. Then there is Finsbury Park for the people of the north, with its pleasant flowing waters, and its modest extent of a hundred and fifteen acres. Pleasantest and most picturesque, perhaps, of all the London parks is Battersea, which has come to great beauty of foliage and pleasant grouping of wood and water. A glimpse of Southwark Park from the top of a tram-car shows a pleasant green surface of sixty-three acres in extent, well planted with young trees, and with a good cricket-ground for the benefit of the dwellers in Rotherhithe and Bermondsey. It is only necessary to mention in this rapid survey those old-established institutions, Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, with their four hundred acres of land and water, while Hampstead Heath, with two hundred and forty acres, consoles itself for the loss of its once wild freedom with its fixity of tenure and security against spoliation under the Board of Works.

Indeed, without taking the outlying parks and commons into consideration, London, with its eight thousand acres or thereabouts, including Epping Forest, of open ground, will bear, as has been said, a favourable comparison with the other great cities in England. Liverpool comes next, after exceptionally favoured Bristol, with four or five parks of six hundred acres in all. Birmingham has ten parks, but all of small extent, as their whole acreage is hardly a third of that of Liverpool. Manchester is far in the rear with three parks, the largest of only sixty acres, and Salford, with four parks and a recreation-ground, has barely a hundred acres among them. Sheffield, again, with three parks and four recreation-grounds, only shows a hundred acres as full score. Indeed, among the great towns Leeds is well in advance, with its fine Roundhay Park of three hundred and fifty acres, while the rest of its open spaces, including the old historic Woodhouse Moor, amount to a hundred and sixty acres more. If we take the test of population, and assume as the requisite amount of open park and recreation-ground one acre to each thousand of population, we shall find that London, Leeds, and Bristol are the only three great centres of population which exceed that allowance.

Not that it must be understood that London is even yet adequately supplied with open spaces in her densest quarters. The little bit of ground close at hand, where children can resort in play-hours, and

workmen smoke a pipe in peace at the end of a hard day's work; these plots of ground, so precious and so valuable, it is the mission of the Playground Association to seek out and reclaim. It provides seats also for wayside scraps of turf, and tries to plant in wide and roomy roadways. There are great opportunities in the wide thoroughfares of the East End, such as Whitechapel and the Mile End Road, and without interfering with the roadside markets going on there, to plant an avenue of trees along the margin, a deed which should earn the blessing of a future generation, and afford verdure, if not shade, to the present existing race.

For all the good works effected by the Playground Association, its income is still on a very limited scale; but then it spends a mere trifle on costs of management. The offices of the society are at the house of the chairman, Number Eighty-three, Lancaster Gate, W., and the only salary paid is a very modest honorarium to the secretary. With this exception all the funds subscribed go to the playgrounds of London in some form or shape, and surely the assistance of such a beneficent society only requires to be more widely known to bring in a large accession of subscribing members.

COPTIC MONASTERIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

So much attention has lately been directed towards Egypt, that most subjects connected with it have been pretty fully discussed. Some extracts from the diary of M. Sonnini (a French naval engineer and naturalist, who, just one hundred years ago, travelled in Upper and Lower Egypt for the sake of scientific research) may, however, prove interesting.

In those days, Egyptian travel was by no means so safe and easy as in our times, and M. Sonnini passed through many unpleasant episodes ere he reached the famous Lakes of Natron. He describes his delight when, wearied by the frightful monotony of the desert across which he had been travelling, he at length reached a chain of hills furrowed by deep gorges, and on reaching their summit (a toilsome ascent, over soft fine sand), he beheld at a distance of about six leagues a parallel range, and in the valley that intervened a vast sheet of water, its banks covered with shrubs, and with a prodigious number of wild-

duck of many different species, while rosy flamingoes stalked to and fro in the shallows among green aquatic plants and tall reeds—reeds which are greatly prized by the peasants for making pipe-stems. The leaves are used for making mats.

The French visitor learnt that the lakes vary greatly in size, according to the season. Sometimes they dry up, so that only two small pools remain, while at other times both overflow, and unite to form one great lake. When the two lakes separate, and their waters subside, the ground which they have inundated, and now leave exposed, is covered with a sediment, which is crystallised and hardened by the sun—this is the natron. There are also thick banks of rock-salt of dazzling whiteness. The thickness of these layers of salt varies according to the longer or shorter continuance of the waters on the ground. Where they have lain but a little while, the natron lies in thin cakes, almost like snow-flakes. Sometimes this substance forms on the surface of the waters so thickly that camels can walk over it, as we might walk over ice. At other times the waters are clear and limpid.

The principal harvest of the natron is gathered in the month of August, when it is raised from the ground by the aid of iron tools, and is packed in camel-loads, and so transported to the Nile, where it is shipped for Cairo.

On the shore of one of the lakes, a small house was pointed out to M. Sonnini, as that wherein St. Maximous, a saint held in much reverence by the Copts, was born.

Leaving the lakes, the traveller proceeded in a south-west direction across sand entirely covered with hardened natron, which rendered the march exceedingly fatiguing both to men and beasts. At length he came in sight of a large building in which, secluded from the wicked world, dwelt a brotherhood of Coptic monks.

Describing this monastery, M. Sonnini says that he cannot believe that a situation more horrible and forbidding could be found on the earth. Built in the middle of the desert, its walls, though very high, cannot in the distance be distinguished from the sands, having the same reddish colour and naked aspect. There is no apparent entrance. Not a tree, not a plant of any size, is to be seen. No road leads to it; no trace of man is to be observed near it; or if, perchance, a human footprint is visible, it is quickly blown over by the

ever-shifting sands, or else effaced by the track of wild boars or other wild animals, the rightful dwellers in such hateful solitudes. Such, he says, is the harsh and repulsive appearance of this retreat, which is inhabited by a most useless race of ascetics.

As he drew near the monastery, his Arab escort went forward to endeavour to obtain admission, a favour which was not always readily granted to strangers. While the tired traveller and his servants with the camels lagged behind, suddenly they became aware of a cloud of dust rapidly approaching them, and in a few moments found themselves surrounded by a troop of wild Bedouins. Resistance being hopeless, they were immediately captured and stripped; clothes, property, and money were all taken, and the luckless traveller deemed that he had indeed fallen on evil days as he saw these lords of the desert begin to quarrel over his goods.

Greatly, however, to his astonishment and satisfaction, the robber-chief presently came up to him and restored his clothes, watch, and various other articles, and he then learnt that Hussein, his own Arab escort, having seen the approach of the Bedouins, had returned with all speed, and happily possessed so much influence as to be able to induce the new comers to give up their spoil, and respect his safeguard. So after a very uncomfortable half-hour, the adventure ended without further damage than the loss of a large sum of money, which was abstracted from a purse, supposed to have been returned intact, and M. Sonnini, thankful to have got off so easily, deemed it well not to call the attention of his Arab guardian to this circumstance.

The Bedouins, thus transformed from foes to the semblance of friends, now did the honours of the desert, and mounting their late prisoners on their own horses, led them to the shadow of the monastery walls, from the summit of which baskets, containing bread, and wooden platters filled with lentils, were let down by ropes. The whole troop, with their guests, formed a group on the sands, and shared the meal thus provided.

Hussein now ascertained that the robber band had been for many hours lying in wait for the travellers, of whose approach they had informed the monks, adding that they purposed concealing themselves behind the walls, and shooting the travellers as they approached. At the entreaty

of the Copts, they had, however, abandoned this murderous intention.

Having escaped this danger, the next difficulty was to obtain admission to the monastery. This was granted with exceeding hesitation, on the plea that the strangers might prove to be Mahomedans. One of the senior monks was let down by a rope to satisfy himself on this score. When convinced that the new arrivals were Christians, the monks agreed to receive them, but insisted on drawing them up by ropes run on pulleys. To this the strangers strongly objected, as the walls were very high, and, perceiving on one side a small door, or iron wicket, they demanded that it should be opened.

This the monks refused, declaring that it was never opened when Arabs were known to be in the neighbourhood. However, they at length yielded to the energetic remonstrances and threats of Hussein, who was resolved to obtain shelter for his camels, and with infinite precaution they opened the gate. But it was low and narrow (the "needle's eye" of Scripture), and truly the camels found it a hard struggle to enter. Hussein made them lie down upon a mat, and to prevent them from rising, tied one of their legs by a cord passed round their back. By the joint exertion of several men, the camels, having their heads held down, were, one after another, dragged in upon the mat by a series of most uncomfortable jerks.

It was quite dark ere this operation was finished. The monks then conducted the whole party, except Hussein, to their chapel, where there was a long service, followed by a scanty supper, consisting only of plain boiled rice.

This monastery had previously been inhabited by Greek monks, who had here sought to emulate the fame of the ancient Anchorites, more especially of St. Macarius, whose name has been bestowed on this part of the Nitrian desert.

Within the high outer walls, there is a sort of small fort surrounded by ditches, over which is built a drawbridge, and here the monks retire when the Arabs succeed in forcing the outer wall. They told M. Sonnini that ten years previously they had been obliged thus to take refuge from Hussein, who was then the most formidable of Bedouins, though he had now for some years led a peaceable and honest life. He had besieged the monastery, and having effected a breach in the great walls, had pillaged and sacked the place. Small

wonder that his presence was not very cordially welcomed on the present occasion.

The little fort was always kept provisioned, so as to resist a long siege. Within it lay the cistern, and the church, a simple building, with no ornament save a few ostrich-eggs pendent from the roof, and some very poor pictures of saints. Here, too, was the monastic library—old books and manuscripts written in Coptic, which is a compound of Greek and of ancient Egyptian. These lay unheeded on the ground, worm-eaten, and covered with the dust of many long years, unread by the monks, who, indeed, appeared quite indifferent to learning in any form, but who nevertheless regarded these works of their predecessors with considerable veneration, and would on no account sell them.

Their own cells were very dirty, vaulted dens, "suited," says M. Sonnini, "to the slothful and ignorant wretches by whom they are inhabited." He certainly was not favourably impressed by this "religious" brotherhood, whom he describes as sunk in vice and laziness. There were in all twenty-three persons in the monastery. Their dress was, to his eyes, as unpleasant as was their coarse food to his palate. It consisted only of a sort of robe, worn day and night over a long shirt of black linen, dirty and unwashed. Its dismal colour, and the dark complexion, short stature, and mean appearance of the wearers, were extremely repulsive. M. Sonnini describes these modern Coptic monks as the most filthy and disgusting of mankind.

Nevertheless, in the pursuit of science, he lodged in this monastery for some time, sharing the coarse fare of the inmates, which consisted only of biscuit made of flour of lentils and rice boiled in salt and water, without any sort of seasoning, detestable cheese, and now and then a little honey, with no beverage save brackish and ill-tasting water. How he must have longed to exchange this hateful food for a comfortable dinner in Paris, and how he must have sympathised with the Israelites, when, weary of desert-fare, they craved a return to the flesh-pots of Egypt!

The monastic food-supplies were all voluntary contributions from the Coptic peasants, who from time to time come to the monasteries in the desert to worship and do penance. Further supplies are sent thrice a year by the wealthier Copts of Cairo, and the caravans which bring these offerings are invariably respected by the Arabs, who consider the monastery as, in

a manner, their own storehouse, where they can always count on claiming food whenever they pass near. In all these monasteries, a cord hangs from the wall, and anyone approaching unperceived, has but to pull the rope, which rings a small bell, and so summon the brethren. Then provisions are let down for the use of the wayfarer.

These monastic retreats must have been very numerous in olden times. Two monasteries, and two other deserted buildings, lay within a radius of two leagues from that of which we speak, which, however, was the most important, being the repository of the sacred bodies of no fewer than seven saints, of whom the most revered were St. Maximous and St. Domadious. These precious relics were, of course, enshrined in the church; but the Arabs confided to the travellers their belief that the bones thus treasured were those of camels and asses, which had died in the desert and had been carefully collected by the monks.

Four of these great monasteries were specially renowned for their libraries, namely, Deyr Suriana, Deyr Baramoos, Amba Bishoi, and that of St. Macarius. From these many valuable ancient manuscripts in Arabic, Coptic, and Syriac have been rescued, and committed to the care of more intelligent guardians than the modern Coptic monks.

According to M. Sonnini's account, even the religious services in the monastery were not always edifying, as frequent disputes arose among the monks as to what psalms and anthems they should sing, and the squalling of Turkish and Arabic airs, with an accompaniment of noisy, clashing cymbals, made the church re-echo with a medley of jarring sounds.

He made a point, however, of being frequently present at service during the day, though he declined to attend the midnight mass. As a French Catholic, his attention was naturally chiefly attracted by the points of difference in ritual. He was struck by the attitude of devotion. "The monks," he says, "neither kneel, sit, nor stand, but remain on their feet, leaning against the wall, with their bodies bent forward, and supporting themselves on a kind of crutch, in the form of the letter T" (which is the form of the cross commonly accepted by the Coptic Church).

"The chancel is separate, and kept shut, as in the Greek churches. The priest celebrates mass with water. The sacred

vessels are of glass. Common bread is consecrated; the priest cuts it in pieces, and mixes it with consecrated water. Of this, he eats a few spoonfuls, and then administers a spoonful to all present.

"After the communion, the officiating priest washes his hands, places himself at the door of the chancel, with his wet hands extended, and every person goes in procession to present his face to be stroked, so that the faces of the congregation serve instead of a towel.

"During the mass the priest also blesses little round loaves, which are not half-baked; these he distributes at the conclusion of the services, a distribution which is not always made without some quarrels. The priest who celebrates mass is dressed in a kind of white shirt, made with a cowl, and covered with little crosses. During the other prayers he wears only a large fillet of white linen, with similar little crosses, half twisted round his head in the form of a turban, and the two ends hanging down before and behind.

"These Copts are fond of the bustle of rites and ceremonies, which rapidly succeed each other. They are always in motion during the time of the service. The officiating monk, in particular, is in constant exercise; he is every moment scattering incense over the saints, the pictures, the books, etc. At every one of the operations he kisses his left hand. After having made frequent use of his censer, he runs up to each of the persons present, applies his hand to their forehead, and again seizes hold of his censer. When all his rounds are finished, he gives his benediction with a small cross, on the top of which he first sticks a little bit of wax taper. When the whole service is over, everyone of the congregation goes and kisses a little cushion, covered with a greasy cloth, then a cross, and afterwards the shrine of the saints, on which he rubs and rolls his head."

Hussein refused to remain at this spot for more than one night, but for five days did this enquiring Frenchman remain in the dreary monastery of Zaïdi el Baramoos, at the end of which time he secured the escort of another friendly Bedouin sheik.

On his departure he purposed making a moderate offering in return for "the disagreeable entertainment" he had received. His purse having been well-nigh emptied by the Arabs, he could not afford to be extraordinarily liberal, but considered that six sequins would be ample payment for

five days' lodging and board on lentil-bread, with lentils boiled in salt and water.

This, however, was by no means the view taken by Father Michael, the Superior, an emaciated, wizened, and avaricious old man, who told him that it was proper that he should make an offering for the convent, which, he observed, required to be entirely whitewashed. He should also give something towards the embellishment of the church; and must make an offering for the poor, and also to himself as Superior. For these various items he modestly demanded six hundred sequins. On learning how widely different were the calculations of the stray lamb whom he had counted on so effectually fleecing, the old man flew into a terrible passion, called on the saints to avenge such ingratitude, and prayed that Heaven would speedily send to the convent some tribe of hostile Arabs, whom he could commission to pursue the ungenerous stranger, and avenge his cause. Finding, however, that his alternative lay in accepting six sequins or nothing, he sent a messenger, at the last moment, to request that they might be bestowed on him, and the traveller went on his way with small respect for the monks of the Nitrian desert.

NINETEEN CENTURIES OF DRINK.

WHAT an appalling title! and when the author quotes from the Paston Letters Sir John's sage warning to William Gogney that Edward the Fourth is coming to Yarmouth on a progress, and "that he purvey them of wine enough; for every man beareth me in hand that the town shall be drunk dry, as York was when the King was there," we begin to think there is some justification for it, and to console ourselves with such poor conceits as:

Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
The English have always got drunk,
Therefore they've always been a most reasonable nation.

This reminds me of a friend who jokingly maintained that a nation's work in the world is always in direct proportion to the amount it drinks. The Scotch, he would say, drink the most of any people in Europe, the Portuguese the least. The Scotch are the most, the Portuguese the least, energetic of European races. You find Scotchmen everywhere, from the Falkland Islands to Corea; but where do we find a Portuguese? Of course it is not a fair parallel. The Scotch are far less drunken than the vodka-loving Russians, who are as stupidly standstill as

a people can be. The Portuguese did not drink more in the days when they were foremost in the work of maritime discovery; they always held their own in the New World against Spain, and nowadays Brazil stands in very favourable contrast to any Spanish-American colony from Mexico to Buenos Ayres. Portugal, again, is still doing an important work in East Central Africa, and counts for more than even we do in some parts of the Dark Continent.

My friend, however, was joking, and this temperance book, "Nineteen Centuries of Drink," can be nothing but a long and dull joke, if it is meant to prove that we have always been of all nations the most drunken, and that all "our national disasters, from Vortigern's loss of Kent, and Harold's loss of Hastings, to the payment of the Alabama indemnity, were brought about by drink."

In every age, one must admit, there is a deal about drinking in our poets and our prose-writers. I dare say there is as much in those of other countries, if we went to look for it. I am sure there is in the writers of old Rome and modern Italy. But the modern Italian does not treat the subject as the average Englishman does. We are the most didactic of nations, and the fondest of washing our dirty linen in public. Your Tuscan poet rattles on in praise of drinking, and descants on the qualities of Montepulciano and a score of other wines, without one word of blame for toppers who take a glass too much. Your Briton, unless he is in a particularly rollicking mood, gets maudlin, and tells the world how depraved the state of society is, and (more's the pity) that the excesses which offend everybody's eyes show that the nation is fast going to the dogs. That is our way of looking at things. Lord Beaconsfield would probably have laid it to the charge of "the melancholy ocean" that we so often think everything is going to the dogs; and yet England lasts on, and keeps her place and something more among nations that take a more cheerful view of the general outlook.

Premising so much, lest anybody should lose heart through thinking us specially wicked because Dr. French has been able to bring testimony from every age to our drinking powers and convivial habits, I shall just set down a few of the out-of-the-way facts which he has laboriously collected. The names and titles of his authors fill fourteen closely-written pages; and I am certain

that out of fewer pages of French or Chinese writers—not to go to heavy drinkers like the Germans—I could make out quite as strong a case against the French or John Chinaman. Well, Diodorus says that the Britons were habitually water-drinkers, though, on grand occasions, they would get drunk on metheglin, or on what the Welsh nowadays call cwrw, "always quarrelling in their cups." The Romans, says Dr. French, corrupted these simple folk by bringing in wine among them, just as we, with our "fire water," corrupt aborigines all the world over. But, unlike our rum and whiskey, the Roman wine did not destroy as well as corrupt.

Who found out distilling? How "natives" of all colours must rise up in the world of spirits and curse him. I have been lately reading Mr. Kerry-Nicholls's *King Country*, describing how he went through the length and breadth of the Maori reserve; but I was not able to enjoy a page of it after coming, near the beginning, on this saddest of all sad passages: "The men of the Arawa tribe, noted for their giant physique, have, in these degenerate days, a marked predilection for raw rum and strong tobacco. They used to till the soil, but now their harvest is interviewing tourists, whom they coax into their village-hall, and for whom they will either sing hymns or dance the grossly indecent ha-ka, whichever their visitor please."

Anyhow, the Roman made a better hand of the Britons than we have of the Maoris. He may have got them into the way of drinking the Emperor's health and of toasting the British belles in those elegant villas, with their heating-apparatus, and baths, and mosaic pavements, which he taught them to build; but he did not improve them off. The long stand they made against the incoming English was mainly due to their having learnt from him how to build walls and to defend them. Look how long the conquest took. Why London, seemingly so all-important to the conquerors, was not taken till the Mercians came down on it in the rear more than a century and a half after the landing of Hengist. We have not taught the Maoris fortification; quite the contrary, the rifle-pit is a Maori invention; and we have taught them to drink raw spirits.

But after the Romans had gone, Britons and Englishmen vied with one another who should drink deepest. One knows all about Rowena and her fatal "wacht heil," and Gildas and Nennius

give a sad picture of British drinking habits; while an English poem, preserved in the book given to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric, reads just like an early version of John Barleycorn. Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, who was mainly instrumental in bringing the North of England under Rome, and cutting it off from Aidan and the Scotie Church, was one of the hardest drinkers of his time, and at the dedication of his church at Ripon, where two Kings were present, there was such a disgraceful carouse, that one wonders that the whole land was not put under an interdict.

Dunstan was all for temperance. Though he is said to have insisted on King Edwyn not retiring till the coronation-feast was over, he was very hard on drunken clergymen, and would only suffer one alehouse in a village (we sadly want a Dunstan now in some districts), and set pegs* in the drinking-horns that each man might know how far he ought to drink. He set his face too against holding wakes (vigils before the village Saint's day) in churches.

Dunstan did not, however, insist on the clergy being teetotalers; even monks had times of special refreshment called misericords or charities, when each had a cup of wine or beer and a plate of honey. The Danes gave a religious tone to drinking; St. Olave was with them a favourite toast, and so was St. Michael. And drinking brought them little good; "they were drunken with wine from the south," says the Chronicle, when they made St. Elphege of Canterbury a target for their dinner-bones, and then felled him to the ground with the back of their axes.

Harthacnut died in a drunken fit while pledging the company at a marriage feast in Kennington Palace. This feast gave occasion to a hoax which was the original of those in the Antiquary and in *Pickwick*. Steevens had a grudge against Gough the antiquary; so he got a stone slab, chiselled on it some old English letters about Harthacnut cying gedronke vin, and then had it "discovered" in Kennington Lane. The bait took. Gough showed the slab before the Society of Antiquaries (Archæologists, a much more cautious race, had not yet come into existence), the learned Pegge wrote a paper on it, and you can find it figured in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lx., 1790.

* These pegs in Latin were pinnæ, whence the phrase which his friend the Calender uses of John Gilpin, "in merry pin." A peg-tankard held two quarts, and was divided into half-pints by eight pegs.

The Danes, Shakespeare learnt from Brompton the Chronicler, by nature were mighty drunkards; but the same Shakespeare makes Iago say that "your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander are nothing to your English." And that (if we are to believe the historian Niebuhr) is how we came to lose Hastings: "England at the time of the Conquest was not only effete with the drunkenness of crime, but with the crime of drunkenness." This is a heavy indictment; but our own Fuller had said long ago: "The English being revelling before had in the morning their brains arrested for the arrears of the indigested fumes of the former night, and were no better than drunk when they came to fight."

But were the Normans so much better? Their soldiers certainly drank deep, as poor Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester, found to his cost. He was obliged to have a large body-guard, because, being the sole remaining English bishop, he had to be watched. Not caring to shut himself up and break the old custom of dining in public, he would keep them company for hours, restraining them as well as he could by his presence, and pledging them in a tiny cup, which he just put to his lips, while, amidst all the din, he was meditating on the Psalms. Waltheof, the one English layman of note whom the Conquest had spared, undoubtedly fell through drink. He was at "that bride-ale which was many men's bale," when, contrary to William's will, Ralph de Wader, Earl of Norfolk, was married to the sister of Roger Fitz Osberne, Earl of Hereford, and having drunk deep, he readily joined the plot against the King, which was arranged at the wedding-feast. Next day, the fumes of the wine having evaporated, he repented, and going off to Lanfranc the Archbishop, made full confession. But it was of no avail. His wife, Judith, the Conqueror's niece, to whom he had also told the secret, hated him, and took means for making her uncle implacable, and the miserable fellow died as he deserved to die, and nothing shows more strikingly what abject creatures the English of that day were than that they actually more than half canonised this double traitor.

Vines were no novelty in England; but of course most of our wine came from abroad. Perhaps the produce of the monastery vineyards was used by the holy men with the view of mortifying the flesh. Anyhow, the getting of Guienne did for

the twelfth century what the Gladstone Treaty did the other day—made claret cheap and plentiful. Every ship trading to Bordeaux had a fixed tank (*pipa garda*) in its midst, out of which the sailors “sucked the monkey,” as they sometimes do in these days. And then, as now, there were Frenchmen who preferred “pell ell” to their national beverage. William Fitz Stephen, in his *Life of Thomas à Becket*, says that when he went as Chancellor to negotiate a royal marriage, he took as presents waggon-loads of iron-bound casks of beer, for the French admire that drink, which is “wholesome, clear, of the colour of wine, and of a better taste.”

Drinking went on at such a rate under the Plantagenets (i.e., in the first claret period) that Dr. French uses the fact to show how hopeless it is to keep down one kind of drink by another. “We thought beer would beat gin out of the field, and now, with equal folly, we expect light wines to get the better of both beer and gin.”

The Crusaders were great toppers; and to them is due the bringing of spirits. The Arabs had re-invented distilling, but the process is described by Galen and Zosimus, writing in the second and fifth centuries respectively. It is thought to have been known to the old Chaldees, and from them transmitted to the “Scythians”—Tartars, who, like the Koords nowadays, were always making inroads towards the Mediterranean. Alcohol is, of course, an Arabic word—probably the same as the Hebrew “*kaál*,” Chaldee “*cohál*,” meaning anything highly subtilised, whether in powder or spirit. In the former shape it is applied to the finely-powdered antimony, the “*kohl*” with which Eastern women paint their eyelashes. With the article, “*al*,” it is the spirit, or, as Lucifer, in Longfellow’s *Golden Legend*, says:

The elixir of perpetual youth,
Called alcohol in the Arab speech.

This, by-and-by, became a formidable rival to the older liquors, of which Giraldus Cambrensis writes: “Their constant habit of drinking has made the English famous among all nations. Both nature and custom make them drunkards. It is a strife between Ceres and Bacchus; but, in the beer which conquers and domineers over them, Ceres prevails.” Spirits, however, were not made or much drunk in England till the sixteenth century. Even abroad, for a long time, brandy was only used as medicine, the efforts of chemists like Raymond Lully being devoted to

rectifying what the Arabian Abucasis had taught them how to produce in a hydrated form. How is it that whiskey (*uisge-baugh*—water of life) got into use so much sooner in Scotland and Ireland? It cannot be because mountains are unsuited to malt-making, for much of Ireland is plain, and the Welsh have never exchanged their ancestral *cwrw* (beer), such as it is, for spirits.* Moreover, good ales are still brewed in Scotland and Ireland, notably at Drogheda, and the old song about King Arthur’s Court testifies that in early times

The Scot loved ale called blue-cap.

I suppose the habit of spirit-drinking was learnt abroad. Scots of the Dugald Dalgetty class brought over that and other bad customs; and they were a numerous class, and from them the colonists to Ulster were largely recruited. Scot-ale (*Low Latin*, *Scot-allum*) had, by the way, in old records, a far different meaning; it is, properly, a gathering where each paid his share, and thence comes to mean a public-house. In King John’s reign the council of St. Alban’s forbids “viscounts, foresters, and others to hold Scot-ales where they pleased.” A King’s officer would hold a Scot-ale within one of the royal forests, out of the range, i.e., of the Common Law, and thither he would compel men to repair, just as a publican nowadays is sometimes able to prevent a man from getting work, unless he deals with the “house of call,” where workmen assemble and wages are paid.

Beer, under the Plantagenets, was bad—what can you expect when the regulation price was two gallons a penny in cities, and three and four gallons for the same money in the country? A great deal of it was made of wheat, and to take off its mawkishness, it was flavoured with spices and (like the brandy we send to West African chiefs) with pepper. The stomach of that day demanded spicy drinks. Wine was very generally drunk as *hypocras*—i.e., mixed with ginger, cinnamon, long pepper, and sugar. Chaucer was a wine-merchant’s son, had his daily pitcher of wine from the royal table, and was controller of the customs of wine and wool in the port of London. Of his franklin, or country squire, he says:

A better envyned man was no wher non,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke.

The sumpnour (summoner before the

* Whiskey once tried to get a footing in South Wales. In Henry the Eighth’s time, numbers of Irish settled in Pembrokeshire, and fell to distilling what is now their national beverage

bishop's court) was fond of "strong win, as rede as blood;" but, when he was well drunk, he still had his wits about him. He would, indeed, "crie as he were wood (mad)," but at the same time, "then wold he spoken no word but Latin."

The British sailor behaved in a way which soon taught the French to use double casks.

Full many a draught of win he hadde draw
From Burdeaux wood, while that the chapmen slepe;
Of nice conscience toke he no kepe.

Still, in spite of losses, the "chapmen" could afford to sell Bordeaux in London so cheap, that it was retailed in 1342 at fourpence a gallon, Rhenish costing sixpence. Wine grew rapidly dearer; the Hundred Years' war must have thrown a vast breadth of vineyards out of cultivation.

Church-ales were got up to help the poor in days when there was no poor's rate. Their origin goes back to the Love Feasts of the primitive Christians; but in more modern times they were brewings by the churchwardens, during which all other brewing in the parish was forbidden, the profits being devoted to poor's relief, and to keeping up the church fabric. The old saying, that in a village you are sure to find the best ale near the church, probably arose from these ales being held at the "church-house." Such "ales" paid wonderfully well. The parish-books of Kingston-on-Thames show that seven pounds fifteen shillings (near one hundred pounds of our money) were taken at one of them in 1526. Sometimes the church itself was the place, especially at weddings, where a bride-ale was held, with the same object as a Welsh "bidding." The bride sold the ale, and each drinker gave what he pleased towards setting up the young couple in housekeeping. A Canterbury visitation in 1468 forbids such ales, on pain of excommunication; but in that century, "two mazers to remain in the church for to drink it at bride-ales" were part of the ordinary church furniture.

Petruchio had his bride-wine, "and threw the sops all in the sexton's face."

Hops, which were used in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century, were forbidden in England two centuries later, the doctors insisting that they were unwholesome, just as they have so often stigmatised tea and coffee as "poisons."

Drink had to be twice tasted between the cellar and the table, first by the butler under the marshal's eye, next by the cupbearer, who must have had a strong

head, especially if he served an archbishop. In Archbishop Booth's house eighty tons of claret were drunk yearly; and at the installation of George Neville to the see of York in 1464, one hundred tons of wine were drunk, besides three hundred of ale.

It is easy to collect anecdotes of English drinking. The stories of Wolsey, when rector of Lymington, being put in the stocks by Sir Amyas Paulet for being drunk at a fair; of Cromwell dropping the corkscrew just as he was going to open "one bottle more" towards the end of a drinking bout, and laughingly remarking to his generals, who were down on their knees to pick it up: "Should any fool look in at the door, he would think, to see you like that, that you were seeking the Lord, and you are only seeking a corkscrew;" are about as authentic as that of Pitt telling Dunbar, as they rolled into the House together: "Don't tell me you can't see the Speaker; I see two."

They are in good company; every German vouches for the authenticity of the lines:

"Who loves not woman, wine, and song,
Remains a fool his whole life long,"
Says Dr. Martin Luther;

and what Warton calls "our first drinking song of any merit," that which opens the second act of Gammer Gurton's Needle, and begins with:

I cannot eat but lytle meate,
My stomake is not good.
But sure I thinke that I can drinke
With him that wears a hood,

was written in 1550 by a Bishop of Bath and Wells—predecessor, therefore, to the author of the Morning and Evening Hymns—who had been Master both of St. John's and of Trinity, Cambridge.

Amid the many testimonies to English tippling one is thankful for Camden's remark that "We, who of all the Northern nations had shown ourselves the least given to immoderate drinking, first learned in the Netherland wars to swallow a large quantity, and to destroy their own healths in drinking that of others." So sweet Anne Page calls Falstaff "a Flemish drunkard." Tom Nash, the Elizabethan town-wit, reckons up eight kinds of drunkenness; among them, "Ape drunk, when a man leaps, and sings, and hollows; martin-drunk, when he drinks himself sober ere he stirs; and fox-drunk, as many Dutchmen be which will never bargain but when they are drunk." In Hamlet, we remember,

the palm is given to the Danes: "They clepe us drunkards;" and in an authorless Elizabethan play called "Looke to't, for I'll stab ye," we read of "the Dane that would carouse out of his boote;" and the heavy drinking at James the First's court may have been partly due to his Danish marriage, for, as late as 1632, Howel (Letters) saw the King of Denmark carried away in his chair after the thirty-fifth toast from a banquet he had given to the Earl of Leicester, all the officers of the court being drunk likewise. Not long before, Roger Ascham had found pretty heavy drinking at the Imperial court. "The Emperor," he says, "drunk the best that ever I saw, never drinking less than a good quart at once of Rhenish wine."

Under the Stuarts arose a new fashion in drink. Spirits, known as "strong-waters," or "comfortable waters," came into vogue; but, in spite of the excessive drinking, in which he and his court set such a bad example, James's statutes are full of enactments against drunkenness. Fines and the stocks were freely threatened, but, it seems, seldom used. There were still too many public-houses in too many English villages; but Dekker speaks of places "where the whole street is but a continuous ale-house, not a shop to be seen betwixt red lattice and red lattice." "In many places," says Lord Keeper Coventry, "they swarm by default of the justice of the peace;" and this is still too often true.

Charles the First was as temperate as his father was the reverse; but his clergy were not all of his mind. There are, perhaps, still one or two very old-fashioned places where wine is set out in the vestry that the parson may take a glass before preaching; but under Charles, and also under the Parliament, entries like these (from the Darlington parish books) are common enough: "For one quart of sack bestowed on Mr. Gillet when he preached, one shilling and fourpence; for a pint of brandy, when Mr. Ball preached here, two shillings and fourpence; when the Dean of Durham preached here, spent in a treat with him, three shillings and sixpence."

In drinking, the Cavaliers did not have it all to themselves. Against Lord Macaulay's dictum that "in the Puritan camp no drunkenness was seen," may be set Pepys's account of Monk's troops in 1659: "the city is very open-handed to them; they are most of them drunk all day."

Charles the Second drank, of course; one remembers how, when he was going away from dinner at Guildhall, the Lord Mayor ran after him, and overtaking him in the courtyard, swore he should not go "till they had drunk t'other bottle." Charles looked at him over his shoulder, and, humming the old line, "And the man that is drunk is as great as a King," at once turned back and did as he was bid. Yet Charles issued his celebrated Wine Acts reproving "a set of men of whom we are sufficiently ashamed, who spend their time in taverns and tippling-houses, giving no other evidence of their affection to us but in drinking our health." Such Acts could not do much good while men like Rochester and Sedley set the tone of society; and the tone of society may be judged from the fact that the very sober James the Second, very early in his reign, had to give out that he would not allow courtiers to come drunk into the Queen's presence, and that Jeremy Collier, the moralist, could thus satirise the prevailing custom: "Sir, if you please to do me the favour to dine with me, I shall do my best to drink you out of your limbs and senses. And before we part, you shall be well prepared to tumble off your horse, to disoblige your coach, and make your family sick at the sight of you."

Evelyn notes the barbarous custom of making the guests' servants drunk. Defoe—whose Poor Man's Plea deserves reading as much as Robinson Crusoe—says that "no servant was thought proper unless he could bear a quantity of wine," and tells how, after the debate which put William on the throne, a very great lord said to his lackey: "Jack, go home to your lady, and tell her we have got a Protestant King and Queen, and bid the butler make ye all drunk, ye dog."

Even on the stage drink was a terrible reality. In Higden's Wary Widow, the author contrived so much drinking of punch that the actors could not get through with it, and the audience had to be dismissed at the end of the third act.

It was to the spirit trade that the "Glorious Revolution" gave the greatest impetus. In 1689, the import of spirits was forbidden, and anybody was allowed to set up a distillery on giving ten days' notice to the excise. William's example, too, which his wife (despite her doctor's advice) followed only too well, was as bad as it could be; his banqueting-hall in Hampton Court was

nicknamed "The Royal Gin Temple." But it was not till about 1724, that the passion for gin spread like an epidemic. More than three and a half million gallons of spirits were distilled yearly; whereas, before 1689, the average had been considerably less than half a million. The ordinary advertisement: "Drunk for a penny; dead drunk for twopence; and straw for nothing," ushered in a state of things of which Hogarth's Gin Street gives us a glimpse. Happily Admiral Vernon saved the navy by insisting that the sailors should mix their spirits with water. They grumbled, and called him "Old Grog" (he wore a grogram coat); but in time they got to like the less pernicious mixture. We can imagine how the universal intemperance disgusted Franklin; he found that his fellow-apprentices drank five pints of porter apiece at their work, besides what they took out of hours. The miserable failure of the Gin Act of 1736, and the excitement caused by it, would alone fill an article. In spite of all legislative attempts, the consumption of spirits in England and Wales rose from thirteen and a half millions of gallons in 1734 to nineteen millions in 1742. A legislator's training hardly tended to make him serious in regard to temperance. Walpole's father—no worse than hundreds of other squires—used to say to his son: "Come, Robert, you shall drink twice to my once; for I will not permit the son in his sober senses to witness the intoxication of his father." What hereditary lawgiver was it who, when George the Third said to him, "They tell me you love a glass of wine," replied: "Those who have so informed your Majesty have done me great injustice; they should have said a bottle." George the Fourth, so drunk at his wedding that he could scarcely be kept upright between two Dukes, was only acting up to his youthful training.

William the Fourth was relatively temperate; and spirit drinking at any rate was on the decrease—about five and three-quarter million gallons yearly in the decade from 1821 to 1830; rising during the following ten years to an average of nearly seven and three-quarter millions. The great question now is whether doctors are right in so freely prescribing stimulants. No doubt sometimes "alcohol is life"; but, if by taking it in illness a habit of excess is formed, it brings death in its train. Defoe—in Colonel Jack—gives a sad instance of this, a type of many cases that have happened

in real life. "My wife, who before had never drunk a glass of wine unless she was forced to, during her illness was pressed by doctor and nurse to take this cordial, and that dram, whenever she found herself faint. By-and-by these were no longer her physic but her food, and she would be drunk in her dressing-room by eleven of the forenoon." Doctors are getting wiser; and so is the public. For if Charles Knight could walk round London on the next holiday he would find things far better than "the dismal spectacle of drunkenness everywhere, not shame-faced, creeping in maudlin helplessness home, but rampant, insolent, outrageous, so that no decent woman, even in broad daylight, could at the holiday seasons dare to walk alone in the Strand or Pall Mall." This was only fifty years ago, and Charles Knight did not exaggerate.

LEFT OUTSIDE.

A STORY OF KENSINGTON GARDENS.

CHAPTER V.

It was lucky for Susie Lane that an opportune toothache on the part of John Thomas caused her to be let in by the housemaid, who had shown herself of an indulgent spirit on a previous occasion, as Mrs. Farquharson was thus prevented from ever hearing of the late hour of her governess's return; and by another fortunate chance the girl was sent off to the Gardens earlier than usual next day, with all three of the children (the boys having begged off from school on account of the heat), and ordered to keep them there, in a shady part under the trees, for the whole morning. Susie obeyed joyously. Anyone taking the trouble to look at her, indeed, must have been startled by the change in the quiet little girl, whose usually pale cheeks were flushed to a deep crimson, and whose grave eyes seemed fairly sparkling with inward happiness. Even her feet betrayed her by refusing to walk as slowly and sedately as usual; and when they were fairly on the grass, and under the shade of the elms, her spirits rose to such a height as to find vent in little ripples of song, breaking out, every now and then, as if from the very overflowings of a heart too full for repression.

She was going to meet Virginia!

Virginia was not there; but, as Susie said to herself, it was really too early to expect her; and so for the first hour her new gladness held full sway, and she only started up every five minutes or so in

the thought that she saw her friend coming. During the next hour the little song-snatches died off of themselves, and her eyes, watching eagerly the space between the gate and the fountains, gained a sharpened intensity; while her interest in the children's games and chatter became so languid that, had Mrs. Farquharson been present, she might almost have felt justified in dismissing her nursery-governess on the spot. During the third hour she suggested that the boys should roll their hoops up and down between the fountains and Speke's Monument, where she had once before met her friends, she herself accompanying them; but ever returning more quickly than she went, from an insane dread that Virginia might have arrived at the trysting-place in her absence, and ever with a deepening shadow in her wistful eyes. After that it was the children's dinner-hour, and she took them home. There were tears in the eyes then; but if anyone had told her that all that while the young American was curled up among her sofa-cushions, enjoying the delights of "dolce far niente," and forgetful of everyone else in the world, the tears would have been dried up quickly enough in indignation at the speaker. She would not have believed him.

Next day was the same. She had recovered a little from her disappointment during the afternoon's teaching, and had slept peacefully at night, for might there not have been a thousand and one reasons for Virginia's absence? That she had meant to come, Susie felt quite sure, remembering the earnestness of her manner in making the appointment. Who was to know, indeed, that it was not the hinted at project for her friend's benefit that detained her? Perhaps it was not as yet sufficiently matured; and to-morrow she would hear all about it. So "to-morrow" Susie's step on her way to the Gardens was as light as yesterday, and her eyes as clear. Virginia would be sure to be there to-day—quite sure. There could be no doubt on the subject; only—she was not.

And on the morrow, and the day after, it was still the same. Virginia never came, neither did any letter come from her to account for her absence.

Susie had not thought of that alternative at first; but as soon as she had persuaded herself that her friend must be ill, or prevented by some other equally strong reason from keeping the tryst she had been so urgent in making, she made

sure also that she should have a letter to tell her of the fact; and accordingly took to watching for the postman's knock when at home as eagerly as she watched those green paths in Kensington Gardens when out.

She even went so far as to ask Jane, the housemaid, once if she was certain that no letter had come for her—when she was not at home, perhaps—and had got mislaid; but Jane shook her head.

"A letter, miss? No, not that I know of. John Thomas takes 'em in, you know, an' carries them for the doring-room straight upstairs; but, if there's any others, he just touches the 'all-bell for me to come for them, so I'd be sure to have seen if there had been one for you. Was it anything important, miss, you was expecting?"

"Oh no," said Susie faintly; "it was only a note from a friend, but—but I should be very sorry to miss it." And there was an irrepressible quiver in her voice at the idea, which touched Jane's heart. She said sympathetically:

"Lor, miss, if it's the friend as you was out with the other evening, he may write yet. A week or so ain't nothin' to a man; they do hate letters so, even the lovingest of 'em. I'm sure my young man he don't write to me once a month if he can 'elp it."

Susie's mild eyes opened wide in surprise for an instant; then a deep blush came into her cheek.

"My friend is a lady, Jane," she said with a poor little effort at dignity, which, however, did not impress Jane, who only laughed at it downstairs.

"As if I hadn't seen 'im myself on the doorstep with her, an' kissin' her hand for all the world like the lovers in them Bow Bells or Fam'ly Novelist's pictures. Well, I do hope he ain't going to play her false, for I wouldn't lead the cooped-up life she does up there for anythink; an', as I told you, cook, I thought he looked too fine a gentleman to be for marryin' a nussery governess."

Poor Susie, meanwhile, had hidden herself in her room with a burning face, and a heart beating, faster than it had ever done before, with shame and agitation. Hitherto she had couped her disappointment with Virginia's name only. Even to her own heart she had never breathed a thought or expectation of hearing from that friend's brother again, and had resolutely tried to put out of her mind that kiss, from whose momentary pressure her hand had seemed to tingle ever since, and the mere thought of which made her pulses throb and her eyes swim. She was no ascetic, poor little

Susie! There was nothing whatever of the man-renouncing nun or male-despising, advanced woman about her. If it had pleased Heaven to send her a lover, even a much more commonplace one than Calton Medlicott, she would have looked at him kindly and taken him contentedly. She was one of those women who are made for wifehood, seeing that to love is easier for them than to unlove, even if the object of their affection is utterly unworthy of them; who are faithful through infidelity; tender under ill-treatment; and go broken-hearted to the grave because a bad husband has gone there before them. But, as it happened, no husband, or possible husband, had ever come in Susie's way. She had never had a lover, or been in love in her life; and from having known no other girls since she grew up, and read few novels, she positively knew less of the tender passion at twenty-three than most young ladies do at thirteen. As for Calton Medlicott, surrounded as he was with all the ideal excellence which, to her mind, must belong to any brother of Virginia's, he might have kissed her hand every time they parted, and she would not have dared to build a hope on the action. It was from kindness, she told herself; and even kindness from him to her was an infinite condescension. To think of him as a lover! Why, the mere suggestion by a vulgar servant-maid that she could do so, filled her with such a sense of humiliation and self-contempt that if she had seen him coming towards her at that moment, I think she would have run away.

But with regard to friendship and Virginia it was quite different. Virginia had sought her out, had kissed her, and claimed her as a friend—a "real friend," as Susie quoted to herself; not, I grieve to say, understanding that Transatlantic colloquialism in its right sense. Virginia had praised her, confided in her, talked of carrying her off, professed so much—so much more than Susie herself. Where was she? What could have happened to her to bring about this total silence, which seemed stranger and stranger as the days went on. Was she seriously ill? Had Susie offended her or her mother in any way that last evening? But that could not be, for never had any people parted from her more affectionately. But what, then, could be the matter? Might she herself write and ask? But no, that would be too like forwardness and presumption. What should she do if—if she never heard of them again? The poor child fretted and puzzled

over it incessantly. She thought of nothing else, indeed, except when she was too hard at work to think at all, and Jane, bringing in the governess's solitary supper of an evening, would find her sitting doing nothing, with Millet's Angelus on her knees, and her eyes too full of tears to look up.

"Ain't you 'ad that letter yet, miss?" the girl would say sympathetically. "Well, it is a shame;" while Flo often asked:

"Miss Lane, why don't that lady who was always guessing things, and gave me the sweets, come to the Gardens now? Is she gone away, or isn't she a friend of yours any longer?"

"Oh, Flo, I don't know. Don't tease me, dear; I don't know," poor Susie would say in a stifled voice.

These comments were like the rough turning of a knife in a deep-seated wound. And all the while, if she had only known it, there was a copy of the *World* lying in the drawing-room, containing, among other items of fashionable gossip, a paragraph on the too sudden departure of Mrs. J. Vanderbilt Medlicott, U.S., and her charming daughter, for New York, with a full description of the latter's dress at the late fancy fair; but society papers never got up to the schoolroom in Clanricarde Gardens. When Mrs. Farquharson had quite done with them they descended to the basement, and no one there knew the name of Miss Lane's friends. The poor child was breaking her heart for a word, a sign from those whom she was too faithful herself to suspect of fickleness, and all the time the explanation which would at least have laid her hopes and expectations at rest for ever was within her reach, and she did not know it.

"Well, this is a queer thing, anyway," said Calton Medlicott, laughing. "See here, Medora, a letter for Jinny!"

The lady he spoke to—she was standing at the window of one of the best private sitting-rooms in the Great Western Hotel—turned round and repeated:

"For Virginia? Where from! And how did it come here?"

"Goodness knows! The clerk below gave it me just now, says it's been lying in the office nearly ever since my mother left last year for home. They kept it owing to something Jin had said about returning, and then forgot all about it till I asked just now if there were any letters for the name of Medlicott. What shall I do—mail it to her?"

"I guess that wouldn't be much use at

this date. You'd better open it and see who it's from. It's a woman's hand, and Virginia hadn't any friends here but what you introduced her to."

"That's true. Most likely it's only an invitation. What a joke to answer it now!"

He had opened the letter—it covered three sides of a sheet of note-paper—as he spoke, and glanced at the signature with a slightly puzzled expression, muttering to himself:

"Lane? Lane? I don't recollect——"

But next moment a flash of remembrance came over him, and it was with a graver expression that he read the contents:

"DEAR MISS MEDLICOTT,—I have not liked to write to you before, lest I should tease you; and I know how many other things you have to do and see without being troubled by me to whom you have been so kind already; but Mrs. Farquharson has just told me that they leave town next week, and I cannot bear to go away without bidding you good-bye, and thanking you once more for all you have done for me. I did hope to have seen you again before now. When we last parted you told me to be sure to be in the Gardens next day to meet you; and I have been every day, but you have not come, and it seems such a long time since you did, and since that happy evening—the happiest in my whole life—that I spent with you, that I cannot help feeling as if something had happened, or that you are ill. But I know it is not long in reality, and, perhaps, you have only been too busy to come to the Gardens as you intended. Dear Virginia, I do hope it is so. Pray, if you have time, write me one line on a card to say you are well, and then I shall go away without the heartache I have now. I would not ask this, but that you told me we were to be real friends for ever, and you would only have said that if you meant it. My life was all dull grey till I met you, and you filled it with sunshine; but I think it would be black, not grey—as black as a dark night—if I were never to see you again. Think what it is to have only one friend in the world, and then you will know how I think of you, and thank you, and long to see you.—Your loving and grateful friend, SUSAN LANE."

And beneath, was written in a little corner:

"Please remember me to your mother and Mr. Medlicott. I did not half thank them for their kindness that night; but I have got my flowers still, and I mean to keep them always in remembrance of it."

A curious little flush came into Calton Medlicott's face. He had forgotten Susie Lane altogether since he came into his uncle's property, and married the lady whom Mrs. Medlicott had called "that minx." He did not believe that even Virginia had ever given the girl a thought during the year that had elapsed since their last meeting; and yet, in reading this little, badly-worded, school-girlish epistle, how it came back to him that evening, Faust, Lucca's voice thrilling upward in those divine arias, and the little girl in the corner, the girl with the soft, pure face and liquid eyes, and the quaint old muslin gown. He seemed to see her again as they stood on the doorstep of the house, where she trod her daily treadmill, and earned her scanty wage, with her wistful eyes uplifted to his, telling their tender story all unconsciously in the nervous grip of the cold little hand. Even the scent of those roses—his roses—came back to him, and with it his own sensations of the moment: the sudden impulse of tenderness and desire, the half-formulated thought that a man might do worse things than take this pure, gentle-natured young creature away from all the hardships of her present life, and devote his own to making it as happy as it ought to be. He had spoken of her once to Virginia shortly after their return to the States—he was glad to remember it now—and Virginia had answered, clasping her hands:

"Miss Lane! Why, I do believe she never crossed my mind till this moment. Poor Susan! I guess she's sitting in those Gardens now, wondering wherever I have got to. Well now, if I've time some day I must make out to write to her," but of course the letter never had been written. Calton knew his sister, knew the whole race of his fair compatriots too well to have the slightest doubt as to that for a moment. He could have laughed at the whole idea if it had not been for the letter in his hands, the pitiful cry, "Don't forsake me quite!" breaking through all the more pitiful efforts at commonplace gratitude and contentment. "Only one friend in the world," and that Virginia! "You filled my life with sunshine when you came into it; but it would be black as night if I were never to see you again." "You told me we were to be real friends for ever, and you would only have said that if you meant it."

But why had Virginia said it, or why did this girl assume that she meant what she said? People in society never did, but, of

course, she was out of all that kind of thing, and if her life was so dull and colourless—

It came into his head all of a sudden that he would go to Clanricarde Gardens and see her. She might have left that situation ; but, after all, it was only a year ago, and she had not seemed a person likely to change. It was a lovely June morning, and perhaps if he went by the Park and Gardens he might even meet her, as he had done once before, when he thought how pretty she looked in her skimpy pink frock, with that wonderful light and illumination flushing her face and eyes when she saw him. Was it possible—he hoped not, being a married man—that the poor little thing had cared for him as well as for Virginia ?

There was no such meeting to-day, however, and when he did get to Clanricarde Gardens he nearly turned round and walked away again ; for the windows were shuttered up, the flowers in the balconies dead, and the steps covered with dirt and dust as though the family had left or were out of town.

There was someone in the house, however, for a boy with a flat parcel ran up and rang at the bell while he stood hesitating, and an old woman came out into the area and looked up at them. Seeing a gentleman she came up the steps, and then Calton asked for Miss Lane.

"Was she still—?"

"Yes, sir ; oh yes," the woman interrupted briskly ; "she's still here. It's not going to be till to-morrow. The reverend gentleman—her step-pa, I think—come up to make arrangements for it yesterday. You're a relation, too, I suppose, sir ?"

"Not a relation ; only an old friend," said Calton, smiling. So there was a wedding in question, and his remorse on Virginia's behalf might end very prettily in a wedding-present. "Will you ask if she will see me ?" he added with an odd little feeling of mortification which he could hardly have defined.

The woman stared.

"She ! Oh, of course, sir, you can see her ; leastways as an old friend, I don't suppose there could be any objection. We've laid her out in her own room, but she ain't in her coffin yet ; the reverend gentleman only ordered— Why, goodness gracious me, sir ! didn't you know she was dead ?"

Calton could hardly speak, the shock was so great.

"Dead !" he muttered helplessly,

"Why, yes, sir, three days ago. Well,

I do beg your pardon ; but I made sure you knew ; though, to be sure, it was sudden at the end. What from ? Why, I don't eggsackly know. The children had all had scarlet-fever in the spring, and she helped to nurse 'em, and just as they was better an' goin' away to the seaside for change, she took ill. No, not o' the same thing ; only a sort o' break-down, the doctor said. She never was over strong, you know ; but when the family was ready to leave she wasn't fit to sit up, let alone go home to her own people, as had been fixed for her to do. It was a great bother to Mrs. Farquharson, for she couldn't have her plans upset, of course, as wasn't to be expected from a lady in her position ; but she said, at last, Miss Lane might stop here till she was strong enough to go home, and she left Jane, the housemaid, to look arter her."

"Stop here !" repeated Calton, his eyes wandering to the dreary, papered windows. "That young girl—alone !"

The old charwoman nodded.

"Well, sir, Jane did say as she thought 'twouldn't have hurt the missus's pocket to ha' took the pore thing to the sea along wi' her own children ; an', as you says, a gurl is a gurl even if she's only a guv'nness ; but Miss Lane, she didn't complain. She told Jane she'd just as soon stay here, for her mother had only lately been confined, and her stepfather seemed nervous lest she should bring the fever with her to the house. She seemed to be gettin' better, too, at first ; an' even went out a few times, leanin' on Jane's arm, as far as the Gardings, where she used to crawl up an' down in the sunshine atween the pond and that monument there. But 'twas too much for her. She come back each time more feverish an' exhausted ; and the last time she fainted when she was puttin' on her bonnet, an' had to give it up. Arter that she kep' her room, an' one day Jane found her cryin' over some bits o' things she was fond o' looking at an' playing with—a string o' blue beads, an' a photygraff o' two people sayin' their prayers in a potater-field, they was, an' I think some friend had give 'em to her ; and says she : 'Jane, if I wasn't ever to get well would you do something for me ?' Jane said in course she would, an' says she : 'There's a white dress an' a pair of mittens in that drawer that I wore one evening when I was very happy ; so happy that I thought heaven couldn't be much better. I hope it wasn't a wrong thought ; but it was only once—only once in all my life ; and if I were to die now,

Jane, I should like you to put them on me, and tie these beads round my neck, and lay the picture in my coffin with me; and there are some dead flowers, Jane, in the drawer. I should like to have them in my hand when I am dead, for they are all I have to remind me of my happy time—such a little, little time, only a few days, in all the years since my father died. I couldn't leave them behind."

"Jane, she cheered her up an' told her she wasn't going to die, an' wouldn't she like to have some friend sent for; but Miss Lane said no, she had no one to send to; her mother was ill and her sister at school; and she had never had but one friend—only one! She was crying again, an' seemed so weak that Jane made her go to bed, an' offered to go for the doctor; but Miss Lane couldn't bear giving trouble, an' said no, he was comin' next day, and she wasn't really worse, an' didn't want anythin' but to be left quiet. I went up to her myself, an hour or two later, with a cup o' tea an' some toast; but she was sleepin' then; so I just put 'em down aside of her, and come away; and that's the last I saw of 'er alive. She was gone next morning."

"Gone! But how? In Heaven's name, not—alone!"

"Well, sir, it was Jane's evenin' out, an' Miss Lane 'erself told her not to think o' stayin' in; an' I was sittin' below the whole time with the door open in case she called or rang; but she never did. Onst I did think I heard 'er coughin' (she'd an awful cough), an' I went upstairs arter a bit an' knocked at her door, but there wasn't a sound, so I looked in an' said: 'Miss Lane, my dear, are you asleep, or wouldn't you like a light?' but she didn't answer, so I come away as soft as I could; an' when Jane come home, I said: 'Don't you make a noise. That poor thing's sleepin' beautiful, which the doctor said was just what he wanted her to.' So we crep' up to our own beds like mice; but, lor, sir! when we went in in the mornin', there she was lyin' dead with her head fallen a little off the pillow as if she'd been tryin' to get to the tea and couldn't; an' two tears on her poor cheeks; an' them beads I told you of cuddled in one hand, an' held tight to the last. Won't you come up an' see her, sir, instead o' standin' there? She's quite a pretty sight, tho' I says it as shouldn't, seein' that I helped Jane to lay her out just as she wanted; an' there she lies now, wi' the

beads roun' her throat, an' the bunch o' flowers—dead an' brown they are, pore things!—in her hand, more like an innocent girl goin' to a party than a corpse. I'm free to own I didn't think it was the correct thing myself; though Jane, she would have it; an' when the reverend gentleman come, I covered it all over with the shroud, as it should be, fearin' he'd be vexed; but lor! he never gave more than one squint at her face, and then walked out o' the room. I'm thinkin' she didn't get much love or kindness in her life, pore gurl! an' yet she was the gentlest creature. You are coming up, aren't you, sir?"

But Calton said "No, no," shudderingly, and, giving the woman some money, went hastily away. He was sorry for it afterwards. Something told him that to Susie's tender nature it would have been an unspeakable comfort to think that even one face she had loved should look down on her in death. But that comfort, too, was denied to her; and at the moment he felt it to be impossible. Why, only a few moments back he had been thinking of her in that very frock, with his roses in her soft, slim hands and that lovely flush and light on her face; and now she lay there cold and dead, alone as she had lived, robed by hireling hands, with all the wistful sweetness gone out of those tender grey eyes for evermore.

He went back to his hotel like a man in a dream. Poor Susie! Were there many such lives as hers, such mistresses, such endings?

Only those few happy days in all her life; and then—"the darkness!" If only she hadn't said that about the darkness! For it seemed as if he and his had really brought it upon her by nothing but caprice and forgetfulness—awakened her heart only to break it.

At least she had been content before. She had known of nothing better. Now! He almost felt as if Virginia, in her folly and thoughtlessness, had crushed out a life, and he had helped her.

But that was absurd, and an exaggeration. There had been excuse enough for forgetting her at the time. If she had been of their social world, in any society at all, she would have known all about it and understood.

Did she understand now? But no, no; it was some comfort for him to think that there was no fear of that. She was outside of all these things still. They could never touch her more.

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